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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
Research and Analysis Branch

R & A No. 2195

RATIO OF OFFICERS KILLED TO OTHER RANKS KILLED IN THE GERMAN GROUND FORCES

Description

An analysis of German documentary material on the proportion of battle casualties in the German army suffered by officers and enlisted men.

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SUMMARY

Analysis of German documentary material on battle casualties of officers and enlisted men in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy tends to validate the ratio in use in the obituary method of casualty analysis.

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This study is based on captured German unit casualty lists compiled in MIRS3/CI/Apprec./40/44.[1] The bulk of the material bears on the campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The total number of cases of killed and wounded relevant to this study is 5,598 of which 4,779 or 85 percent occurred in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The remainder of the casualties tabulated occurred on the Eastern Front.

The Eastern-Front experience is summarized in the appended table. This experience is, however, insufficient to supply a basis for generalization as to the ratio of deaths of officers to enlisted men. The total number of cases is relatively small. In addition, the units in which these casualties occurred do not constitute a representative sampling of the German army. It is obvious from the table that the units are all "crack" combat outfits. No experience is included involving service troops, army and corps troops, headquarters troops, engineers, signals, etc. The material based on German experience in Russia, collected in the table has been included for whatever interest it may have, but it cannot be utilized as a basis for an analysis of German casualties.

The objections listed against the experience on the Eastern Front do not apply to the material collected on the North African,

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1 The MIRS compilation is not conducive to the fullest exploitation of the captured material but will have to serve in the absence of the actual German documents

Sicilian, and Italian campaigns. The sample of killed in the latter campaigns numbers 1,891 cases and killed and wounded together number 4,779. The experience covers various periods in a total span of two and one-half years from April 1941 to September 1943. As will be seen from the table, the significant experience for the present purpose is, however, that which occurred prior to May 1943 in North Africa. The coverage includes all types of combat troops -- infantry, artillery, etc.; motorized and armored -- as well as headquarters and service troops.

Based on figures of killed only, the ratio of officer deaths to deaths of enlisted men is 1:26.27. Of the wounded only, the ratio of officer casualties to casualties among enlisted men is 1:21.43. Counting killed and wounded together, the officer-enlisted men battle casualty ratio is 1:22.65. The above ratios tend to give some confirmation to the ratio of 1:21.2 in use in the OSS obituary method of casualty analysis.

Two possible objections to the use of this material as a check on the ratio used in the obituary study should be mentioned. (1) It is possible that the organization of some German units in North Africa was not typical. In particular, it may be objected that the proportion of officers to enlisted men was not typical of the usual German unit strength. (2) It may be objected that the character of the fighting in North Africa was so markedly different from that elsewhere that experience derived from North Africa should not be generalized.

It is known that some units sent to North Africa were both specially organized and trained. On the organizational

level this special effort seemed to be directed toward tactical self-sufficiency with emphasis on fire-power and equipment. In matters bearing on personnel, the Germans stressed the age-composition and physical fitness of the troops scheduled for African service. There is no reason to believe that the TO's for specially developed African units showed marked strength differences, measured against "regular" units, where the proportion of officers to enlisted men is concerned. It is not known whether the character of the fighting in Africa produced any special effect on the losses of officers relative to enlisted men.

Table 1. RATIO OF OFFICERS KILLED TO OTHER RANKS KILLED IN THE GERMAN GROUND FORCES.

Unit	Dated	Theater	Killed		Wounded		Total Killed and Wounded	
			Officers	Men	Officers	Men	Officers	Men
"Afrika Korps"	April--22 September 1941	Africa	31	737	119	2,367	150	3,104
I/Gren Regt 71	August--10 October 1943	Sicily-Italy	2	47	6	140	8	187
II/Gren Regt 754	21 April--1 May 1943	Africa	-	18	1	48	1	66
Marsch Bn Afrika 25	1 April--2 May 1943	Africa	-	18	2	65	2	79
II/1 Gren Regt ("H. G.")	20 March--20 April 1943	Africa				3	-	4
12 Coy--Pz Gren Regt 115	25 May--30 September 1942	Africa	3	36	5	105	8	141
3 Coy--Pz Gren Regt 79	9--12 September 1943	Italy	-	4	1	23	1	27
1 Coy--7 Gren Regt ("H.G.")	23 December 1942--24 April 1943	Africa	-	12	4	33	4	45
MG Coy--II/Pz Gren Regt 129	12 July--13 September 1943	Sicily	-	1	-	3	-	4
1 Coy--Pz Regt 7	5 December--14 December 1942	Africa	1	2	2	10	3	12
Pz Bn 900	16 August--September 1941	Africa	1	7	-	11	1	18
Pz Wachr Bn ("H. G.")	25 March--27 April 1943	Africa	-	1	1	4	1	5
1st Jäger Brig 1	1 August--20 October 1942	Africa	2	98	10	425	12	523
334 Inf Div	December 1942--May 1943	Africa	11	332			11	332
Marsch Bn Afrika 24	January--April 1943	Africa	-	30			-	30
Total: Africa, Sicily, Italy			51	1,340	151	3,237	202	4,577
Ratio of Officers to Men			1	26.27	1	21.43	1	22.65
Pz Regt 7	29 June--25 July 1941	Russia	6	35	12	124	18	149
Krad Coy ("H. G.")	June--October 1941	Russia	-	7	2	17	2	24
Pz Arty Regt 92	22 June 1941--9 September 1942	Russia	22	125	44	332	66	457
II/22 Arty Regt	22 June 1941--May 1942	Russia	5	99			6	99
Total: Russia			33	266	57	463	90	729
Ratio of Officers to Men			1	8.06	1	8.12	1	8.10

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